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THURSDAY, JULY 23, 2015

Catholic board under fire

Niagara Catholic District School Board's plan to levy development charges has raised the ire of politicians
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Healing with time



MARYANNE FRITH/
POSTMEDIA
NETWORK

Addison Falardeau sustained serious burns to her body in a 2010 accident, but has since made substantial progress. Pictured clockwise from left is mother Becki Falardeau, Addison, sister Avery, brother Jeff and brother Jackson. See story on page 3.

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DEVELOPMENT

Board's new fees anger cities

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

The Catholic school board has entered the business of development charges — and not all Niagara municipalities are happy about it.

Last month, Niagara Catholic District School Board moved to implement education development charges, or EDCs, that will see an extra fee attached to every new residential housing unit built in Niagara.

Set at \$172 for homes within the former Welland County boundaries and \$186 for those in the old Lincoln County boundaries, the charges will be used by the board to fund the purchase of land to build new schools in areas experiencing growth.

Because Niagara Catholic is considered a "growth board" by the Ministry of Education, it has been granted approval to levy the development charges, said education director John Crocco.

To gain approval, a background study was submitted to the province outlining the board's past and projected growth.

After getting the green light from the ministry, the EDC bylaws were approved by the board and came into effect June 22.

While the board was within its rights to put the new charges in place, several municipalities are opposed.

The move to institute EDCs left Port Colborne Council, Yvon Doucet angry — the city recently froze its own development charges in an effort to spur investment in the community.

"To have the school board come in and say since the room is there, we're going to turn around and plow it in... They've put a stop probably to any simulation we were going to have," he told his fellow city councillors during a meeting last Monday night.

"They're going to make us

look like fools," Doucet said, growing visibly frustrated.

The school board, he said, "should be working with us, not against us."

Doucet said what upset him most is that EDC revenue will be collected in Port Colborne, but will be used to support development in other communities.

"There isn't a plan to build any new schools here in Port Colborne," he said, calling it unfair to charge the fee in communities not expected to benefit from the funds.

Port Colborne director of planning and development Dan Aquilina said city staff provided feedback to the school board during the bylaw's consultation process.

It was recommended a moratorium on EDCs be put in place that would match the two-year freeze issued by the city, that Port's community improvement plan areas be exempt and that since each municipality will be tasked with administering and collecting the fee, compensation be provided.

"The school board ignored everything we commented on," Aquilina said.

That led to talk of Port Colborne appealing the EDC bylaws to the Ontario Municipal Board — a step Port Erie officially took Wednesday.

Port Erie's concerns mirror those of Port Colborne, with no new schools projected to be built in the next 15 years, said Rick Brady, the town's director of community and development services.

In appealing, the hope is to see the EDCs if not removed entirely, then at least amended to only apply the charges to high-growth municipalities projected by the board to need new schools, he said.

As the bylaw must be reviewed every five years, with Niagara Catholic reappearing for approval from the ministry changes can be made to add municipalities to the EDC

list if their growth pattern changes, Brady said.

He expressed concern that the town's recommendations, provided during the board's consultation process, were not reflected in the bylaw now in place.

It was made clear, Brady said, that Fort Erie preferred the charges not be implemented at all. But if they were, he said, the EDC should not be applied to areas exempt from the town's own development charges — the downtowns of its villages.

The school board "ignored us," he said, and applied the charge to the town as a whole.

"When the school board decided they wouldn't listen to us, they said they don't care what the community needs." Correspondence has been underway with several other municipalities considering joining the OMB appeal, Brady said.

Pelham council was expected to discuss whether to join the fight this past Monday night, and Port Colborne council meets July 27.

The appeal "shouldn't come as a shock" to Niagara Catholic, Brady said, as the town informed the board it would appeal its own decision were not adhered to.

For now, the town is "collecting the development charges as required," he said, though it does "put an administrative load on us."

"When the OMB makes a decision, we'll go from there." When the issue reaches the OMB, there's a possibility of a hearing or board mediation taking place, Brady said.

"We want to be reasonable about it, but at the same time we need to defend our case."

There's not yet been any indication as to when the case will appear before the OMB. It could be a first for Ontario.

The Ministry of Education "is not aware of any municipalities previously appealing EDC bylaws implemented by their local school board," spokesman Gary Wheeler said.

NIAGARA CATHOLIC EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT CHARGES

Charge rate

Welland county: \$172 per new residential unit.

Lincoln county: \$186 per new residential unit.

Welland county includes Welland, Niagara Falls, Port Colborne, Wainfleet, Pelham, Fort Erie and Thorold. Lincoln county includes St. Catharines, West Lincoln, Grimsby, Lincoln, Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Residential educational development charges in other communities

Waterloo Region District School Board: \$1,266 per unit.

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board: \$723 per unit. Halton Catholic District School Board: \$1,484 per unit.

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board: \$1,039 per unit.

Niagara Falls," he said. "We don't know what will happen in other areas of Niagara."

"No firm decisions have been made" regarding which areas will benefit first from the EDC money.

Crocco believes expansion of the board will benefit all students.

"We believe we serve all schools on an equitable basis," he said.

Niagara Catholic has no borders. The only border is the Niagara region."

The board, Crocco said, must look at all opportunities for funding to assist with that growth.

"If you look across Ontario at other senior EDCs, they're in the thousands of dollars," he said.

"We have one of the lowest rates and we're one of the last (eligible) boards to put EDCs in place."

A number of factors were considered in setting the rate for the EDCs, including the number of past new housing starts, the value of land and site costs, Crocco said.

The decision, he added, was made by the board to not apply the charge to non-residential builds.

As one of the communities projected to see major residential growth in the coming years, Niagara Falls will likely bear the brunt of the EDCs, Mayor Jim Diodati said.

"It's a bit of an odd situation for municipalities to be in," he said, as they have no say in their implementation yet must oversee the collection.

"We don't have any say or control."

The bylaws came out of left field for the city.

"We were a little surprised, because it came without warning," Diodati said, adding he would have expected to hear more about the charge in advance, especially since the city must administer its collection.

The mayor said he was not aware of the consultation meetings held by the board prior to the implementation of the EDCs, and neither was the city's director of finance.

"Unfortunately, things sometimes go under the radar," he said.

One of Diodati's biggest concerns is that the charge could increase over time.

As other Ontario municipalities are faced with EDCs that are "significantly higher," he hopes the board is not using its first year implementing the charge to "get in the door" before "ramping up" the fee.

"I hope that tool is not abused," Diodati said.

He said he does not want to see the projected growth in Niagara Falls "stifled by a new tax."

"That's my biggest concern. I just hope the going to be charged as needed, and not for the board to build up reserves for 50 years from now. It should be for the immediate, foreseeable future."

District School Board of Niagara has no plans to implement EDCs in the near future.

"It's not something we've requested or are considering at this time," spokesman Brett Sweeney said.

As the OSBN is in a period of declining enrolment, all new builds are happening as the result of amalgamation, he said. Land used for those builds has traditionally already been owned by the board or funded by the Ministry of Education, Sweeney said.



JOHN CROCCO

LOCAL NEWS

■ **RECOVERY:** Addison Falardeau still mending nearly five years after Georgia accident

Scars are part of who she is

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

You have to look closely. When the seven-year-old bubbly blonde cannonballs into the family pool, the remnants of the accident that changed her life are barely visible from a distance.

The scars are there, but Addison Falardeau doesn't seem to mind.

They have become a part of who she is, a part that despite her young age she has learned to embrace.

It has been nearly five years since Addison suffered burns to 30% of her body.

The then two-year-old was visiting her grandparents in Georgia for American Thanksgiving when the unthinkable happened.

She was riding a toy truck in the home's driveway when it collided with a deep fryer causing burns to Addison's head, forehead, left shoulder, thighs and right ankle.

She was initially treated at the Joseph M. Still Burn Center in Georgia before moving to The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.

Recovery has been a trying process for the young girl, who has undergone 24 surgeries to repair the damage caused to her skin. She is scheduled for No. 25 next month.

The Sacre-Coeur student, who begins Grade 2 in the fall, has had several tissue expander procedures, through which additional skin is grown and stretched over the impacted area.

It has been able to create new skin on Addison's head that can support hair growth.

The August surgery is expected to be the second to last, along with a hair plug procedure, that will leave the youngster with a full head of hair.

Addison is also undergoing laser therapy every two months or so to help lessen the appearance of her scars.

"They pierce holes through the scar tissue to soften it," father Jeff Falardeau says, while adding it has helped



MARYANNE FIRTH/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Avery, Jackson and Addison Falardeau have a ball in the family's pool earlier this month in Pelham. Addison sustained serious burns to her body in a 2010 accident, but has since made substantial progress.

tremendously to reduce their visibility. Thanks to the procedure, the scars are expected to continue to fade as Addison grows older.

Once she turns 18, Addison will have the option to have additional work done to address the discolouration on her forehead. Often hidden behind her bangs, it is the result of skin grafts.

"But that will be up to her," says mother Becki.

"We always let her decide."

The parents want to ensure their youngest daughter always feels she has a say in her own path to recovery.

"When we go in now, with the amount she's been through, she deals with the doctors," Jeff says.

"They don't talk to us, they talk to her. She's taken control of what's going on."

Despite countless doctors appointments, surgeries and followups, "she never com-

plains," Becki says.

"She's made it easy," Jeff adds, describing how she's taken even her regular massage therapy and occupational therapy appointments in stride.

Though hospital visits have become routine for the Pelham youngster, they are not the only activities marked on her jam-packed calendar.

Addison takes classes three times a week with Miss Dar's School of Dance, plays base-

ball through the summer and challenged herself with a season of ice hockey this past winter.

"We're trying to schedule her surgery for after baseball season this summer," Becki says.

"We try to balance out her childhood."

She also spends nearly each warm-weather day in the family's pool.

"Addison's a fish," brother Jackson, 11, chimes in.

"She's always the first one to get into the water," Jeff adds.

Being in a bathing suit "doesn't phase her," the proud father says, adding his youngest "doesn't even own a one-piece" because she's not shy about her scars.

"But when she's in a bathing suit, people do look at her," Becki says, adding stares most often come from perplexed adults.

"They don't understand what happened."

Addison and her siblings, including Jackson and sister Avery, 9, have all spoken with a psychologist who helped them to understand why people stare and how they can respond to questions of what happened.

"They say 'she was burned, but she's fine now,'" Becki says. Addison is also growing accustomed to answering questions herself.

While the accident was once a difficult topic to bring up in the household, Addison is now more comfortable talking about it.

"At the start, she was more sensitive," Jeff says.

"Now it's just a part of life. You can dwell on it or you can move on."

Jeff and Becki credit the support of their loved ones, as well as the support of the community seen through a number of fundraisers, for allowing their family to progress following the nightmare.

"I'm sure she wouldn't be where she is today without all that support. It's pretty amazing to see how she's doing," Becki says.

"Sometimes even I forget how far she's come."

The family hopes to eventually create a fundraiser of sorts to support burn victims.

"We had so much help along the way, we'd like to pass it on," Jeff says.

"We've had support, so if we can lend support to someone else, by all means."

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■ I'VE BEEN THINKING

Caring for my soul

CORD ABRAHAM
Port Colborne Baptist

We have been taught that we must care for our cars, our RVs, our mega-big flat screen TVs and our retirement plans, but, we rarely care for our souls.

Most of us live so focused on our body and emotions and thoughts that we never even think that we have a soul. "That's only for religious people." Truly, it is for all of us — human beings, created in the image of God.

What is our soul? It is the real person — the you, deep inside the thinking, feeling body — the core of all you are. It is that something within us that is eternal.

We can't put it into material form or locate it in the mind or body, but we know

it is here within. It is that immaterial part of us that we could call our interior or inward part of us; the part that influences and is influenced by our spirit (God connection), mind (thoughts), will (choices) and body (the instrument that acts it all out).

Dallas Willard said the soul is that which

"is running your life at any given moment." "Not external circumstances, not your thoughts, not your intentions, not even your feelings, but your soul. The soul is that aspect of your whole being that correlates, integrates and enlivens everything going on in the various dimensions of the self. The soul is the life centre of human beings."

For "techie" it could be pictured as the central computer in an organization that co-ordinates all things going on. If it is overloaded or affected by a virus, it affects everything else.

For others, more attuned to nature, you could liken it to a stream that flows through the centre of your life — it could be cluttered with debris and polluted, indicating alienation from God; seeking anything it can to satisfy. The best alternative is to have it like the sparkling stream, clear and fresh, enlivened by God's Spirit. But how?

We live as strugglers, broken, wounded, empty and seeking souls; rarely acknowledging or attempting to listen to that soul-voice crying deep within. We try to cover it over with body pleasures, emotional highs or mental detours. All the while we are dying inside and our soul is longing for and crying out for satisfaction. Willard also said, "Your soul is not just something that lives on after your body dies. It's the most important thing about you. It is your life."

So, we need to tend to our souls. What do

I do? Where do I go? I've tried everything else. Call out to your Creator, God.

"God, Jesus, please heal my soul." Give space for your Creator, God, to speak into your soul, even within the noise, pain, struggle, chaos and busyness of your life. Seek out one who evidences a peace and rest in their soul — ask them how the Creator God, revealed in Jesus, can cure your sick soul.

Jesus said, "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me — watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." Matthew 11:28-30 (Message)

Shipwrecks —
Saint LaurentSKIP GILLHAM
For Postmedia Network

The unusual career of the passenger vessel *Saint Laurent* took another strange turn last June.

The ship had been built for Great Lakes, coastal and Caribbean service in 2001 and first came through the Welland Canal as *Cape May Light* that summer.

The owners ran into financial problems and, since the first year, the ship has spent various amounts of time laid up, at Haiti housing earthquake relief workers and at St. John's, N.L., as the summer home for a work crew building a new dock.

It resumed active duty this past spring as the passenger ship *St. Laurent* and made several voyages into the Great Lakes before ripping open the bow on the sill protecting the upper gates of the Eisenhower Lock on June 15. There were a number of injuries among the French tourists on board and it proved to be a challenge removing them from the vessel stuck on the bottom of the lock. In time all were saved, the ship was patched, refloated, and it sailed for Les Méchins, Que., and repairs at the Verreault shipyard.

It is expected to resume cruise service in July.



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Saint Laurent is pictured May 17 in the Welland Canal by Bill Bird.

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■ CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Wind firm gets trail use

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

Despite concerns from Wainfleet leaders, Niagara Region Wind Light has been given the green light to use the Gord Harry Trail.

The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority board approved an agreement with the company Wednesday night that will allow 635 metres of the 13-kilometre trail to be used to bury wind turbine conduits.

In return, the NPCA Foundation will receive \$100,000, which staff has recommended be earmarked toward capital projects in Wainfleet, as well as \$20,000 annually for the next 20 years that will support trail development, maintenance and signage throughout the watershed.

The agreement will also provide the wind energy company vehicle access to the trail, west of Burkett Rd., for subsequent turbine maintenance.

Given the NPCA's conservation mandate, Wainfleet Mayor April Jeffs said she feels the decision is steeped in hypocrisy. "People look at us to be stewards of land in general, especially our own land," said Jeffs, who represents the township on the conservation authority's board.

"We tell people they can't do things on their property, but then with ours say, 'Sure, come on in — and bring your trucks.'"

The board agreed, she said, that the trail is a recreation area, not a conservation area. "But perception is reality."

While she disagreed with the

decision, Jeffs did credit board members for taking the time to visit the trail and examine the area to gain a better understanding of what allowing access to NRW would mean.

NPCA chair Bruce Timms said the board took "great interest in this project," including its potential impact and the concerns expressed by Wainfleet residents.

A balance must be struck, he said, between conservation, recreation and opportunities for revenue to support the proceeding other than the taxpayer.

"The agreement provides us with a sustainable 20-year income to enhance and maintain the trail in top condition," he said.

"Overall, abandoned railway lines make the perfect site for a

balance of recreational use in association with access as utility corridors."

Timms believes the board is "pleased with the final outcome," as NRW has committed to mitigating measures to reduce any impact to the environment.

These include removing non-native plants along the trail outside of the core nesting season of migratory birds; restoring all disturbed areas to pre-existing conditions; replacing any removed vegetation with local species; and installing, maintaining and monitoring erosion and sediment control measures during all phases of construction.

As soon as the agreement is formally signed, a "detailed environmental inventory of the trail's current conditions,"

including photos, will be taken, Timms said.

"The NPCA, he added, will "take every measure" to ensure the contract, including its commitment to restoration, is adhered to.

Wainfleet Ald. Betty Knoch had concerns about the inconvenience and potential safety issue trucks on a recreational trail might mean for user groups.

In light of the money being offered, she feared the board did not adequately "do its homework" before accepting the deal.

"If you took the \$500,000 out of the equation, I think it would have been turned down flat," she said, referencing the total payment the NPCA will receive over the next two decades.

Regardless of the board's

decision, the renewable energy project is set to move forward, NPCA chief administrative officer Carmen D'Angelo said in a news release.

It was a matter of either working with the NRW and ensuring the trail is restored and enhanced, or saying "No and having no ability to hold the company accountable," he said.

"From a staff perspective, an agreement with the appropriate mitigation measures is the best solution that aligns with our conservation mandate and mission."

A proposed alternative would have seen the conduits buried in a farmfield parallel to the trail.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ BIZ BUZZ

Raw wraps readied in Fenwick

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

Her story is far from wrapped.

In fact, Joanne Van Liefland's journey into the business world is just getting started.

It has only been three years since the Pelham resident took the daring leap to quit her full-time job to instead pursue her passion.

The health advocate and fitness buff launched Wrap It Up - Raw, creating organic, raw wraps to satisfy anyone looking for a dairy-, gluten-, wheat-free option.

"I started making wraps for myself and then I started making them for friends and fam-

ily," said Van Liefland, a registered holistic nutritionist.

It was a chance encounter with a health food store owner, who tried and loved her products during a healthy-lifestyle meeting, that led to them being sold in store.

"My kids were heading into university and I thought I'd do it as a hobby on the side," Van Liefland said of the business, which quietly got off the ground.

At the time, she was living in Port Dover.

A move to Fenwick two years ago meant the chance to purchase a house and install a commercial kitchen that would allow Wrap It Up - Raw to flourish.

The business now employs three people who help to handmake the wraps — made mainly from carrots and flaxseed — five days a week in Van Liefland's 18th-century home. "I'm very thankful to the girls who work with me," the 53-year-old wife and mother-of-two said.

"When I was able to actually hire people and become an employer, it was very overwhelming to me. I haven't done this on my own, so many people have helped along the way."

The crew, working like a well-oiled machine, makes about 750 bags of wraps a week to satisfy inventory requests from more than 80 locations across southern

Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia.

"People say they taste great and they love them because they don't break," Van Liefland said of the tortilla-type wraps that are offered in two different sizes.

"I have not spent a penny on advertising," she said, adding it has been word of mouth that has allowed her business to succeed.

"It's all very amazing to me."

Wrap It Up - Raw, she said, is already growing out of the basement headquarters, which is getting tighter as demand continues to grow.

"The next step is to automate."

Van Liefland is busy networking and trying to discover a way to mass produce her products without impacting the quality.

"The missing piece of the

puzzle is the automation," she said, adding she'd like to see that step taken as soon as possible in order to expand into the United States market.

Streamlining the process will also allow Van Liefland to expand the product line.

"I would love to make new flavours once we increase production," she said, adding clients have long been asking for a green wrap to be added to the mix.

For more information on Wrap It Up - Raw, visit wrapitupraw.com.

Newport Signs is in new hands

Marc Fournier has taken over as owner and operator of the longstanding Port Colborne business. He has worked as Newport's operation supervisor for the past eight years and has nearly two decades of experience in the

industry. After more than 42 years in the sign industry, former business owner Frank Di Bartolomeo has opted to retire and hand over the reins.

He plans to continue helping at the Killaly St. W. operation until mid-August to assist with the transition.

Di Bartolomeo, 60, is proud of all he's been able to accomplish with the business as it evolved over the years. Now, however, was the right time to say goodbye, he said.

He's confident Newport Signs is in capable hands and will continue to thrive as a local service provider.

Di Bartolomeo thanked his clients for their patronage over the years that has allowed the business to become a mainstay in the lakeside city.

For more information on Newport Signs, visit www.newportsigns.ca.

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■ ENERGY PARK

Kleinsmith closure rattles residentMARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

It's a daily drive Dan Monger never anticipated making when he purchased his Kleinsmith Rd. home.

The Port Colborne resident has taken issue with plans to close Kleinsmith when a new access road is created off Hwy. 140 to accommodate the coming Nyon Marine Fuelling Corp. energy park and its accompanying truck traffic.

"It's probably 100 feet from my driveway to Hwy. 140 right now," Monger told Port Colborne city council recently.

Once the new road access is opened and Kleinsmith is closed, Monger will have to drive 1.28 kilometres each way to go to and from home to the highway. He said he will have to travel around his entire property, almost 7.2 hectares, to reach his house.

"When I bought my house, it was easy access to the highway. What kind of selling feature is (the new road) going to be to potential buyers?" he said.

"You might say it's no big deal, it's a couple of extra minutes, but it adds up."

Between the new road access and having to pass by the tank farm to reach the property, Monger believes his property's value will be negatively impacted.

The park is to include a 56-tank petrochemical storage facility for diesel, petrol and oil, as well as a solar farm.

A report was brought forward to coun-

cil last Monday to finalize remaining details regarding the road closure, which was included in the city's agreement for the Nyon development.

"This starts the timeline for work to begin," said Cecil Vincent, the city's manager of special projects and corporate strategic initiatives.

The Kleinsmith access, he stressed, will not close until the new access is approved for opening by the Ministry of Transportation. That process could take years, he added.

The city, Vincent said, has included a property protection plan as part of its agreement with Nyon. It will see that homeowners looking to sell their property receive compensation to ensure they get the full value of their home, based on appraisals at the time when a deal with Nyon is signed.

Nyon president Gordon Baker said there are 11 properties within the area that are directly impacted. Copies of the property protection plan, which need to be agreed upon and signed by the homeowners to be considered valid, will be mailed to the eligible homes, he said.

The company, he added, signed an agreement with Monger last Monday night to compensate him for his inconvenience.

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■ PORT COLBORNE HYDRO

Utility's grant program under review

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

The permissive grants handed out by Port Colborne Hydro last Monday night were the last for the year — and possibly longer.

The hydro board is starting a review of the grant system and will report back to city council on whether it should continue in the future.

Grants are handed out twice annually by the board, which this time around received \$55,640 in requests from seven organizations, chair Vance Badawey said.

Six community groups were chosen to receive a total of \$10,500. Cheques were presented at last Monday's city council meeting.

Included was \$800 for Community Artists Niagara,

for creation of two murals at Roselawn Centre; \$1,472 for Niagara Antique Power Association's bake shop renovation; \$2,500 for Friends of the Port Colborne Lighthouses, to assist with the cost of insurance for tours held during Canal Days Marine Heritage Festival; \$8,200 for Friends of Roselawn, for restoration of the facility's original rose garden fountain; \$1,300 for the Kristen French Child Advocacy Centre Niagara, for creation of an online resource database; and \$4,628 for Habitat for Humanity Niagara's Port Colborne home renovation project.

Badawey said board members are expected to return to council later this year with an update on the grant program review. Disbursement of grants has been suspended

until a decision has been made on how to move forward.

During the meeting, council also approved a loan of up to \$100,000 from the city to Port Colborne Hydro on an as-needed basis.

Proceeds from the final sale

of the utility to Canadian Niagara Power in 2011 have been used on several of the city's capital projects, including construction of Vale Health and Wellness Centre. This has, however, left limited funds available for grants, a staff report presented to council

said. The grant program has instead been continued using intercompany loans through dividends from the Niagara Regional Broadband Network to Port Colborne Hydro Inc. PCF is in the process of sale of shares, with funds

used to cover professional fees related to the sale. Once the sale is completed, the loan will be paid back in full, including any interest, from the sale proceeds.

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Butterfly project gets wings in Port

Port Colborne's monarch butterfly pilot project has taken flight.

City council approved the initiative last week that will see rural roadside grass cutting delayed in a targeted area during the summer to protect the butterflies and their offspring.

Grass cutting will be suspended from mid-June to early October for the next three years in the area of Cedar Bay, Pinecrest and Weaver Rds., south of Killaly St. E. and Hwy. 3. Monitoring will be done throughout the area with reports received by council annually to outline any progress.

The concept for the project was brought forward last September by citizen scientist Patty Moss, who in 2014 discovered hundreds of nonarchs had been laying eggs in milkweed patches along Port Colborne's rural roads.

Delaying grass cutting between June and October will not only prevent the eggs from being destroyed, but also provide pollinators the food they need until frost arrives.

Deputy fire chief hired in Port

City council last Monday night appointed Mike Bendia, formerly a fire prevention officer with the Port Colborne's fire services, to the new role.

Bendia was offered the position, created as a result of 2015 budget deliberations, following an internal job posting. He informally assumed the position July 1.

During budget talks earlier this year, council approved \$126,000 for the hiring of a deputy, including salary and benefits.

Council approves Port transit changes

Change is coming for some transit users in Port Colborne.

City council has approved a rate increase for Econo Pass riders, as well as a change to the East Community bus route to now include a stop at Port Colborne Public Library.

The 10-ride pass has been increased by \$2 for adults and students, climbing to \$24 and \$21 respectively, and \$2.50 for seniors, costing \$19.

The rates, which have not been raised since 2008, were increased to account for rising transit, fuel, labour and operating costs. All other fares will remain the same.

The East Community route, which once travelled from city hall north up King St., will instead take Clarence, Catherine and Elgin Sts., stopping at Elgin and King beside the library, before continuing on with the regular route.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS:** Niagara Falls decision sparks new look at fire rules

Port to review campfire ban

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

There was a spark of hope last Monday night for residents hoping to see backyard fires allowed in Port Colborne.

During the city's council meeting, Ward 1 Coun. Dave Elliott expressed concern that other Niagara municipalities have approved campfires on private property, yet they remain prohibited in the lake-

side city.

What ignited the discussion was a Niagara Falls decision to amend its open air burning bylaw to allow campfires with the purchase of a \$20 annual permit. Residents will also have to abide by a number of conditions that dictate when, where and how recreational fires will be permitted.

Elliott received calls from "10 or 12 people in the last week" questioning why Port

Colborne was not following suit.

"I want a report from the (fire) chief on how we can permit that," Elliott said, questioning whether the city could take cues from bylaws in other communities.

"If other towns can do it, so can we."

Fire Chief Tom Cartwright said the city's open air burning policies were included in the recent fire master plan

process and it was determined it would be better to leave the bylaw, which prohibits fires and is enforced on a complaint-only basis, as is.

Port Colborne, he said, receives 50 to 60 burning complaints each year, which may increase if fires are permitted.

"If the fire department shows up and it's determined the fire is safe, then what do we do with the person complaining?" Cartwright questioned.

Permits could potentially be issued, he said, and a fine system put in place for anyone who burns without a permit or outside the permit guidelines.

Cartwright estimated it would take about a month to bring a report forward to council outlining the bylaws being used by other neighbouring municipalities, as well as Port Colborne's options for moving forward.

If council decided to move

forward with modifying the bylaw, it would likely take several months to put the changes in place, he said.

It's a process Elliott said he would like to see get underway, so it could be in place for next spring — if council chooses.

A report is expected to come forward to council sometime in August.

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■ POLITICS

Petrowski apologizes to region chair over gay marriage remarks

DON FRASER
Postmedia Network

Regional c.coun. Andy Petrowski has apologized to Niagara Region Chair Alan Caslin for public comments made against gay marriage.

The apology flows from recent Tweets and an interview with *The Standard*, when Petrowski expressed his religious views opposing gay marriage.

In a Twitter comment posted last week, Petrowski wrote that as a Christian he cannot do condone gay marriage.

Then in a followup interview he said, in part, "If you are now going to say, 'I believe in murder and I call myself a Christian,' that would be perverted.

"That would be twisted.

It's the same thing, the same concept."

Petrowski later said on Twitter he was sorry, writing "... I apologize unreservedly for anything I've said that offends."

In his apology to Caslin released last Thursday afternoon by Caslin's office, Petrowski said he "made comments that were offensive to the LGBTQ community."

"I made these comments while sharing my deeply held religious views on marriage. While I have apologized unreservedly, I want to again clearly reiterate that apology."

His latest apology was copied to all regional councilors.

In the release that contains

Petrowski's apology, Caslin's communications director Jason Tanning adds Caslin "will be reminding councilors about their obligations under the Code of Conduct at the next regional council meeting, which is the most suitable forum to address all of council as well as the public."

It adds: "Niagara Region will continue to be an organization in which all persons are treated equally with dignity and respect for their personal status regarding gender, sexual orientation, race, creed, religion and spirituality."

Apology accepted, Caslin said in an interview.

"I was glad I was able to receive that apology from Council, Petrowski," he said.



ANDY PETROWSKI

"It was definitely received well, being that it is an unreserved apology, I consider the matter now closed.

"Hopefully we can get this behind us," Caslin added.

PETROWSKI'S APOLOGY

Sent: Thursday, July 16, 2015 12:17 PM

To: Caslin, Alan
Subject: Apology Chair,

Last week on Twitter and during a media interview, I made comments that were offensive to the LGBTQ community. I made these comments while sharing my deeply held religious views on marriage. While I have apologized unreservedly, I want to again clearly reiterate that apology.

Since the airing of my comments I have taken the

following steps. First, I have closed my social media account. Second, I pledged to reinforce my commitment to upholding the rights of all citizens of Niagara including members of the LGBTQ community.

Finally, I want to let the community know, I have learned from this experience. It has re-enforced clearly, my responsibility is to represent each and every person in the City of St. Catharines and the Region of Niagara to the best of my ability.

Andy Petrowski

"And I need to remind council all we need to respect the views of everybody, and

what's important to us is getting together with the business of council."

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **PILOT PROJECT:** One-year initiative allows use of Welland detachment parking lot, lobby

Police provide safe space for Kijiji sales

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

Police have entered into the business of making sales transactions safer.

Last Friday, Niagara Regional Police officially launched a one-year pilot project allowing people to use the parking lot and front lobby of the Welland detachment for transactions initiated through online sites such as Kijiji.

The Internet transaction zone at 5 Lincoln St. will provide neutral ground for people to safely exchange money and goods, said NRP spokesman Const. Phil Gavin.

"We want people to come to the parking lot, to feel comfortable," he said, adding the lot is well lit and under 24-hour video surveillance.

The public can use the parking lot any time day or night.

It was an inquiry at a police services board meeting that prompted the pilot project, Gavin said. As a result, similar initiatives underway in other communities were examined and ultimately modified into a model it's believed will work effectively in Niagara.

The Welland detachment was chosen for the project mainly because its front parking lot, with 15 spaces, is larger than the lots at other Niagara stations.

Having the extra room, Gavin said, will mean transactions involving larger objects, such as boats, can take place without impeding the public's ability to park and access the



ALLAN BENNER/POSTMEDIA NETWORKS

Welland Staff Sgt. John Vujasic said the Niagara Regional Police are welcoming people to use the parking lot or lobby of the Welland detachment at 5 Lincoln St., as a safe place to transfer goods purchased online.

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- Where possible, communicate via e-mail so a record is kept.
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- Tell a friend or family member about your intentions.
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- Do not carry large sums of cash.

People do not have to call ahead to use the lot or lobby. Weapons and firearms are prohibited from both the

parking lot and the lobby.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **EDUCATION:** School appoints acclaimed Canadian actor, aboriginal leader

Cheechoo named Brock chancellor

ROB HOULE
Postmedia Network

Brock University's incoming chancellor might be good for business.

Acclaimed Canadian actor/director/writer Shirley Cheechoo has been named Brock's next chancellor, a ceremonial position that will see her confer degrees and awards at convocation ceremonies.

These days, her biggest preoccupation is preparing aboriginal students for a post-secondary education.

Cheechoo, a Cree who has lived on Manitoulin Island for approximately 40 years, is executive director of the Weengushtik Film Institute, a non-profit, artist-focused film and television-training centre she founded in 2002 that also teaches life skills, reading, writing and math.

Reached Thursday at the institute at M'Chigeeng, she said 80% of graduates find work in film or television while 5% decide to return to school, having gained confidence and self-esteem while attending the institute.

She said the goal of the

institute is to not only prepare graduates for a career in film and television, but also help them make the leap to post-secondary institutions.

"One thing that I do recognize as an educator, I see aboriginal youth ... they are really, really reluctant to go to good schools" in larger centres outside of Sudbury or North Bay, Cheechoo said.

"They don't want to make that change to go to Toronto, Ottawa, anywhere. When I ask them why ... they say, 'I don't want to go there, it's too complicated'."

"They go there and they get lost. And so they don't want to go."

She said she is working toward implementing "a transitional year" program at Weengushtik. That program would involve preparing students for life in the cities in which they would like to study.

"Say they want to go to Brock University, we would tell them everything about St. Catharines — where to go, where there's native people, what goes on in St.

Catharines," she said.

"And we would actually take them there, show them where the bus runs, show them where the hospital is. And then make the transition to the university."

Cheechoo said she speaks from experience and that she herself "was lost" when she went from small town northern Ontario to the University of Toronto.

"And it's still happening today," the 63-year-old said. Cheechoo was born in Eastmain, Que. In 1952, but her early childhood was spent in Moose Factory along the James Bay coast. Her elementary education years were spent in residential schools, moving on to high schools in North Bay, Hearst and Sault Ste. Marie before attending the University of Toronto.

She was enrolled in physical education, but dropped out to pursue her passion for the arts. She founded Dehas-jeh-mu-jig Theatre Company, based out of Manitoulin Island, in 1984. She said the company's name is derived from the Cree

HOW A CHANCELLOR IS SELECTED

An advisory committee, chaired by the Senate chair and composed of faculty, students and staff invites nominations; the committee then makes a recommendation to the Senate.

Previous chancellors are Richard Hearn 1966-69; Charles Sankey 1969-74; Cecil Shover 1974-80; Ralph Misener 1980-85; Robert Welch 1985-2000; Raymond Moriyama 2001-2007; Ned Goodman 2007-2015.

and Ojibway languages and means "storytellers."

She gained national acclaim in theatre for her play *Path With No Mooccassins*. While she was in front of the camera in film and television beginning in 1984, she moved behind the camera as producer and director in 1997 for the short film *Silent Tears*.

It was screened at the 1998 Sundance Film Festival and awarded the Telefilm Canada and Northern Canada Award for best Canadian aboriginal language program. Other directing credits include the television movie *Johnny Tootall* and *Moose River Crossing*. Acting credits include the TV series *The*

Rez Sisters, *Backroads* and *M.V.P.*

Cheechoo said she still has an agent but roles are few and far between for a 63-year-old aboriginal woman.

"There's no roles for old women like me," she said.

She is married to artist Blake Dehassig. They have one son.

She has an honorary degree in letters from Laurentian University in Sudbury and has been awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Award for her dedication to education.

She will begin a three-year term as Brock chancellor at fall convocation. She succeeds businessman and phi-

lanthropist Ned Goodman, who has been chancellor since 2007.

She will be Brock's eighth chancellor in its 51-year history. She is the first woman and the first aboriginal to be named Brock chancellor.

"We are thrilled to have her become the titular, symbolic head of our university," Brock president Jack Lightstone said in a release.

"Among other things, we are at a time when Brock is opening new state-of-the-art facilities for our Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts, and Dr. Cheechoo's artistic contribution to our understanding of the lives and experiences of the aboriginal peoples of Canada comes at a seminal moment in Canada's evolution."

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■ CONCERT

Howlerado to headline Owenpalooza

MARYVANE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

They've been spotted in Panama, Costa Rica and Australia.

Some found in thrift stores, others brought on vacation or seen on passersby.

Owenpalooza T-shirts have been popping up around the world and, as a result, have been helping to fulfil Owen Patrick Harold's dream of travelling the globe.

"We want to see the T-shirts, the pictures," said Alicia Rubino, one of Owen's many friends and family members who help to organize the annual benefit concert held in his memory.

"It's our way of having his spirit live on."

The shirts were cut short by a car crash in September 2008.

He was well travelled in his 22 years, but his loved ones want to help him reach the many countries he dreamed of visiting in the future.

The shirts have become a hot commodity at the namesake event, which takes place Saturday at Auberger Richelieu, 565 River Rd., in Welland.

Ordered through Me to We, a tree is planted for every shirt sold and half of the proceeds support Free the Children.

Owenpalooza, now in its seventh year, has carried an environmentally-friendly and socially-aware theme since its inception — all a reflection of Owen and his passions.

"Owen is the driving force for everything we do," said friend and co-organizer David Perotta.

"We all love him so much. This means so much to us to do this for him."

Every decision that's made regarding the event, organizers stop and question what Owen would think about it, co-organizer Marc Demers added.

Because of the sentiment behind the concert, it has managed the world to watch Owenpalooza establish itself in the community and as part of Niagara's music scene, said friend Alan Clarke, who has helped with the event from the start.

"We're never going to stop. We'll be back every year and getting stronger."

Talks have already begun regarding Owenpalooza's 10-year milestone celebration in 2018, which may include more than one day of music.

But for this year, the top-notch lineup of talent ready to rock two stages all night long.

The 19-plus show will feature eight bands and performers, including headliners Howlerado, a Juno Award-nominated indie rock band best known for hits Juliette, Got to Lose and So It Goes.

It was the energy the band brought at its last two Owenpalooza headlining gigs that ultimately encouraged organizers to bring Howlerado back, Clarke said.

MUSIC NOTES

What: A benefit concert and art showcase held in memory of Owen Patrick Harold.

When: Saturday. Doors open at 6 p.m.

Where: Auberger Richelieu, 565 River Rd., Welland.

Why: The concert raises money for the Owen Patrick Harold Memorial Scholarship at Notre Dame College School and Owen Patrick Harold Random Act of Kindness initiative.

Bands: Headliner includes Juno Award-nominated indie rock band Howlerado; Stella Ella Ola, a Howlerado side project; Dire Club, featuring former members of The Snips; Bratwurst Days; The Bends; Drift; Fortune Runners; and Katey Katia.

Also included: Food and a shuttle bus ride home anywhere in Niagara.

Tickets: \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door. They are available at The Rex, 346 King St. W.; M.T. Bellies, 871 Niagara St.; Seaway Mall customer service desk; and Minibombs Records, 27 James St. in St. Catharines.

For more information, visit www.owenpalooza.com.

"They're more than a band, they're good people. We dig their vibe."

Also returning is the Owenpalooza art show, dubbed this year as Material-Eyes, that will feature live demonstrations from local artists.

While the day is a celebration of Owen's life, it is also an opportunity to help his legacy live on in the community.

Since Owenpalooza was created, it has contributed more than \$12,500 toward the Owen Patrick Harold Memorial Scholarship fund at Notre Dame College School.

Several donations, also amounting to more than \$12,500, have also been made through the Owen Patrick Harold Random Act of Kindness initiative for both local and international causes. Some of the donations include \$1,000 toward two service dogs for a Welland family, \$1,000 to Naturopaths Without Borders in Haiti, \$1,000 toward the Julia Turner Hope Cup Tournament and \$1,000 for a basketball court and equipment for an orphanage in Africa.

While those who oversee the RAK fund want people to know they're active in the community, they prefer to keep most of the details quiet.

"Everything we do is a reflection of Owen," Rubino said.

"He wasn't one to gloat about the things he did."

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■ **MUSIC AWARDS:** Tim Hicks up for Album of the Year



JACK BOLAND/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Canadian country singer Tim Hicks of St Catharines plays the Boots and Hearts Music Festival in Bowmanville in August on the main stage. He is up for Album of the Year at this year's Canadian Country Music Association Awards.

Niagara well represented with CCMA nominations

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

Niagara's roots run deep in this year's Canadian Country Music Association Award nominations.

After his breakthrough year, St. Catharines singer Tim Hicks is up for album of the year for his sophomore release *501*, along with Interactive Artist/Group of the Year.

501, released last summer, is also nominated for Album Design of the Year and Record Producer of the Year (Jeff Caplan). Nominations were announced Wednesday morning.

Hicks won the Rising Star Award at last year's CCMA's.

Former Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Mike Denney will also see his company MDM Recordings, Inc. compete for Management Company of the Year and Record Company of the Year. Denney is also up for Record Company Person of the Year.

Denney attended high school in the region, forming his own label in 2008 with the severance package from his last job. He attended the 2008 CCMA's on a recruiting mission and came back with five artists on the roster. MDM is home to rising country star Jess Moskaluke, and last year signed Niagara band The Mandevilles.

After winning Record Company Person of the Year at last year's CCMA's, Denney is "extremely proud" his small label is back competing on a national level.

"I try to instill in our people that passion, hard work and treating people with respect is better than any award or nomination," he said, "but it is really nice to have your industry peers recognize our roster and support

still!"

For Hicks, the nominations cap a whirlwind few years that have seen him become one of Canada's most highly-touted country stars.

He credits his years roughing it in local rock bands for preparing him for a country career.

"It gave me the experience to handle the craziness," he said when contacted Wednesday. "You have to be able to handle the peaks and valleys."

The Niagara Music Awards recognized Hicks first, giving him Best Male Vocalist in 2009 and Best Country Artist in 2011. From there, Hicks played with Blue Rodeo and Ron Sexsmith before earning two Juno nominations last year for Country Album of the Year with *Thru* Down and Breakthrough Artist of the Year.

He jokes his attention deficit disorder helps him handle the hectic pace. Even when he goes home to relax, he has young kids to take care of — "my band thinks it's hilarious."

The CCMA's give him a chance to share the room with peers like Jason Blaine and Dallas Smith.

"You finally have everybody in the same room, which is great. You live in a bubble as an artist."

As for a homecoming show soon, Hicks is fully aware there's a brand new arena in St. Catharines.

"I'm chomping at the bit," he says. "It's just a matter of all the stars aligning."

The CCMA's will be held Sept. 13 at the Scotiabank Centre in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

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■ **DOWNTOWN:** Bands filling a summer void

Livestock taps into music scene

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

It's a summer without SCENE for Niagara music buffs, but Rafik Guirguis hopes to stir up a new scene in the meantime.

With the popular St. Catharines music festival tak-

ing a short hiatus, planning to return in the fall, a 12-hour concert called Livestock Niagara coming to Taps Brewery this Friday will fill some of the void. Though Guirguis started organizing his festival before SCENE announced its delay, he'll gladly take the timing.

"That kind of worked out

in favour of the festival," he says. "What I can say about this festival is that I have a lot of respect for SCENE. I've watched (co-founder Steve Stumble) build from something small to what it became."

"I just thought, the only thing it was missing was the local aspect it used to have.

That's what this is all about."

Livestock Niagara will feature 18 bands — 16 of them from Niagara — playing two outdoor stages set up in the Taps parking lot. Music goes from 2 p.m. to midnight outside, then moves indoors until 2 a.m.

Along with headliners The

Walkervilles and Poor Young Things from Toronto will be local acts such as Xprime, A Book For Wanderers, Katey Gatta, The Kermacs and Levi Randall.

"Absolutely satisfied," says Guirguis, a former member of Niagara metal band Atticus. "This is the best lineup I could have asked for. Every single band that's on here I have some sort of rapport with."

Guirguis, an event planner and bartender at Taps, has watched the Queen St. venue become one of the area's biggest supporters of local music in recent years. Most every night offers original acts from the area.

"That's what they look for, that's what they cater to," he says, crediting owner Eric Martin. "I thought that was really cool, that they're putting

WHAT: Livestock Niagara

WHERE: Taps Brewery, 4680 Queen St., Niagara Falls

WHEN: Friday, 2 p.m.

to 2 a.m.

ADMISSION: Free

a value on original music. There's a lot of really good bands in Niagara Falls, and there's no real scene to support them in Niagara Falls."

To help give Livestock traction, admission is free.

"This is entirely a community-driven event, sponsored by local businesses," he says. "It's put together for the purpose of boosting our downtown and to help our Niagara Falls bands have a platform to get themselves noticed."

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SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Walkervilles headline the first Livestock Niagara day-long festival, happening at Taps on Queen St., July 24.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ BIG BROTHERS/ BIG SISTERS

Two 'Sons' ride Niagara for mentorship charity

DON FRASER

Postmedia Network

A Niagara motorbike tour led by stars of a world-famous crime drama has raised at least \$55,000 for a mentorship program.

Canadian *Sons of Anarchy* actor Kim Coates, who plays Tig, joined U.S. castmate Mark Boone Junior to lead the Big Brothers Big Sisters of St. Catharines-Thorold and District's Ride for Kids Sake.

The event, now in its third year, helps raise cash for the Game On! group mentoring program for boys and young men.

"We left from The Pen Centre, rode around for an hour," said Coates, 57, kicking-back after the Saturday tour. "So we dilly-dodged through tons of acreages, through vineyards and gorgeous country."

His friend Boone, who plays Bobby in *Sons*, added his thoughts during a local media interview in a trailer outside The Pen Centre: "We saw old houses and new houses, intermixed," said the bearded actor. "Swamps, forests, maple!"

"And the cops did a great job stopping the intersections so we didn't stop once," Coates added. About 15 VIP riders joined the group, with the main ride bringing in



DON FRASER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Sons of Anarchy actors Kim Coates (left) and Mark Boone Junior (right) at the Pen Centre parking lot after leading a Ride for Kids Sake motorcycle tour fundraiser on Saturday.

about 250 bikers/fundraisers.

"We had a nice turnout ... last year, we made about \$35,000 and we'll make more this year," Coates said.

"It's really all good."

Coates said he cares strongly about the charitable cause, "and I'm Canadian (from Saskatoon), with my timing; right now I'm filming *Goon 2* in Toronto!"

Sons of Anarchy ended last year after seven seasons and

both actors say they've continued working.

"It was a long time, seven years," Coates said.

His best memory: "It was the guys that I worked with... honestly, there were 10 leads when it started. You ... rarely hang out with people when certain things are done, whether it be a movie or TV show. In the seven years on that show, all the love-ins, fights, the 'can't wait to not see you' when we were wrapping

in November, and 'can't wait to see you' when we started in May."

"Truly, that happened every year."

"For me, I think it was time to stop that show, it went a little nuts for me at the end."

Coates recalled an amusing anecdote: "I remember Charlie and I looking at each other on the fourth show and going 'we're killing who?' and why?"

"We got seven seasons (as originally hoped for) ... a

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE LOCAL BIG BROTHERS/ BIG SISTERS AND SONS OF ANARCHY ACTORS

A Ride for Kids Sake committee co-chair knew one of the *Sons of Anarchy* promoters and was in contact with him to arrange the involvement of Kim Coates (attended 2014/15), Theo Rossi (2014) and Mark Boone Junior (2015).

Coates has been a "huge supporter" of Big Brothers Big Sisters.

In 2014 BBBBS was able to provide the Game On! program to 257 boys in

23 schools across St. Catharines, Thorold and Niagara-on-the-Lake with funds raised from the Ride for Kids' Sake event

— from a Game On! release

★ ★ ★

For more information about Big Brothers Big Sisters of St. Catharines-Thorold and District visit www.bbbsmentors.ca

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